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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Friday, November 26, 1937

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "MAKING SAUERKRAUT IN GLASS JARS". Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C.

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One day last week I visited Helen, a friend of mine. Helen's a top-notch homemaker who likes to experiment. If she hears of a new way to cook meat, or a different method of cleaning a rug, she's agog to try it.

Last week she greeted me at the door. As she took my coat and hat she apologized, "I'm sorry, but will you excuse me while I look after my sauerkraut?"

"So it's sauerkraut this time", I said. "The last time I came to see you, you were making your first quince preserves".

"Yes, and they were good. But come out to the kitchen. I want you to see my sauerkraut!"

We went out through the dining room into the kitchen. I was a little dubious about Helen making kraut just for her husband and herself. I remembered the big stone jar full that we used to put up every winter. And we always had more than we could eat for our family of five. So I asked,

"Do you think that you and John can eat a whole jarful of kraut this winter?"

Helen just laughed. I looked around the kitchen. It was spotless. The only thing I could see out of place was a white enamel pan and four jars. In the jars was what looked like shredded cabbage.

"Is that it?" I asked doubtfully, pointing to the jars.

It was. I looked more closely. The cabbage seemed a bit dry. Most of the juice had oozed out into the pan. I shook my head and said,

"You're losing all the juice and that's what makes it good."

Helen laughed in a superior sort of way. "That's just what it's supposed to do. Want me to tell you about it?"

I did, so Helen launched forth. "You see, I wanted to make some sauerkraut. But I didn't know how. So I wrote to the United States Department of Agriculture and they told me to to it this way.

"Scientists of the Bureau of Chemistry and Soils where the glass-jar method was worked out--told me what kind of cabbage to use, how much salt, and all about mixing and fermenting it. They told me to put it up in 2-quart glass jars and"--

I interrupted Helen, "What kind of cabbage do you use?"

Helen explained, "Well the important thing is that the cabbage be mature. You want it to be compact. If it's green or if it's loose and spongy, it is not satisfactory. And you get the medium fine salt--the kind you use for pickling. I get it at the store in sacks."

"I was very particular when I got my cabbage. I even had the clerk cut one of the heads clear through for me so that I could see it was compact. Then when I brought it home, I took off the outside leaves, and shredded it. I used my slaw cutter to do that. It took about 14 pounds of cabbage for these four jars--eight quarts all together".

"How did you know it would take that much when you mixed it?" I asked.

"Simple multiplication", said Helen. "The directions said to use $3\frac{1}{2}$ pounds for every 2-quart jar. I had four 2-quart jars. $4 \times 3\frac{1}{2}$ is 14 pounds."

"How much salt did you use?"

"Well", Helen said, "the directions called for 4 ounces salt to every 10 pounds cabbage. So I used just a little over $5\frac{1}{2}$ ounces salt for these 14 pounds cabbage. And I mixed the cabbage and the salt together thoroughly in an enamel pan. That enamel pan is important because the salt's likely to corrode tin pans".

"Is that the reason you used glass jars with glass lids?" I asked.

For once I was right. Salt works on the zinc top lids just as it does on tin pans.

Helen went on. She told me how she had mixed the cabbage and salt and packed it lightly just up to the shoulders of the jars. Then she put on the lid and fastened the top wire. She kept this at a temperature of 75 to 80 degrees Fahrenheit--just about kitchen temperature.

"Wouldn't you keep the juice in better if you clamped the lid down?" I asked Helen.

But she set me right on that--this time with a lecture on the process of fermentation. She explained that when the salt draws the sugar out of the cabbage, the sugar starts to ferment. One product of this fermentation is lactic acid. That's what gives the kraut it's sour flavor. Another product is a gas.

This gas forms in the bottom and presses the juice out the top. If the lid were clamped on tightly, the gas would make the jar explode. So every day Helen took off the lid, tamped the kraut down and poured the juice back in.

I asked her just how long she would have to do that.

"Oh about 4 days--just until the last bubbles die down. Then I can clamp the lid on tight. In about 10 days from the time I first put the shredded cabbage in, the fermentation will be complete. I'll have sauerkraut. I'm only going to make about 4 more jars, because it won't keep well through summer storage--it gets soft".

And that's the way Helen make her sauerkratt. Whenever she wants some to eat she simply opens a jar without exposing all the rest of her kraut to the air. And she doen't have to remove and replace a weight a board and a cloth every time she wants sauerkraut.

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